

Guidelines for Acute Gastroenteritis or Norovirus Outbreaks in Healthcare Facilities

Define the outbreak...

Case Definition: 2 or more episodes of vomiting or 3 or more episodes of diarrhea in a 24 hour period

Outbreak Definition: Onset of 2 or more cases within in a 3 day period

When you have an outbreak...

1. Begin a line listing of ill persons (including staff and residents)
 - Complete for the duration of the outbreak (until you have no new cases for 48 hours)
 - Use the line listing to track the progress of the outbreak and to adjust your control measures.
 - An example can be found at following website (http://www.wvdep.org/Portals/31/PDFs/IDEP/norovirus/Nursing_Home_GI_outbreak_linelist.xls)
2. Implement appropriate control measures (see below)
3. Report the outbreak to your local health department and stay in touch throughout the outbreak.
4. Collect specimens
 - Discuss the need for testing with your local health department or Infectious Disease Epidemiology Division.
 - If you collect specimens, we recommend collecting 5-10 stool specimens from recently ill persons. Information on collection and shipment can be found on the Office of Laboratory Services website.
(http://www.wvdhhr.org/labservices/shared/docs/Micro/Collection_and_Transport_Guidelines_for_Noroviruses.pdf)

To help control the spread of infection...

1. Practice good hand hygiene. Promote adherence among healthcare personnel, patients and visitors
 - Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water
 - Ensure individuals wash hands before eating or drinking, after going to the bathroom, or after contact with an ill patient
2. Place patients on Contact Precautions for a minimum of 48 hours after resolution of symptoms
3. Cases should be placed in a private room when possible. If not possible, cohort ill and separate them from asymptomatic patients.
4. Minimize patient movements within a ward or unit
 - Consider restricting symptomatic and recovering patients from leaving the patient care area unless for essential care/treatment
 - Suspend group activities for the duration of the outbreak
5. Consider the closure of affected wards to new admissions or transfers.
6. Exclude ill personnel from work for a minimum of 48 hours after resolution of symptoms. Establish protocols for staff cohorting.
 - Staff who have recovered from recent infection may be best suited to care for symptomatic patients until outbreak resolves.
7. Increase frequency of cleaning/disinfection of patient care areas and high touch surfaces with commercial cleaning and disinfections products registered with the US Environmental Protection Agency as effective against Norovirus. (*See Environmental Cleaning Attachment for more details*)
8. Establish visitor policies for outbreaks and ensure that visitors comply with hand hygiene and Contact Precautions.

REMEMBER: Outbreaks are immediately reportable to your local health department!
For further questions or information contact the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology